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## Creative Italian Storytelling: from literature to Cinema to other Forms of Fiction

PROF. MARA PERBELLINI

### Overview

**Area:** Cultural Studies

**Dates:** 12-30 July (3 weeks)

**Campus:** Milan

**Course Number:** LT/AR 320su

**Term:** Summer 2021

**Credits:** 6 ECTS

### Course description

Adaptations have long been a mainstay of Hollywood, Cinecittà and the television networks. Many of the most successful international films are indeed adaptations of novels, plays or true-life stories.

We will analyze important adaptations for the seventh art, understanding the changes from the source material to the new text and identifying the resistance of literature and true life story.

This course includes a creative experience through literature and cinema: the writer's lab. Each student will be given tools to write a short story and develop it into a short film screenplay.

This course provides the student with a new knowledge of Italian humanities, from literature to cinema to biography. It is a great opportunity to discover the Italian culture through the arts of time: literature and screenwriting. And also a great opportunity to learn creative techniques in writing.

### Prerequisites

None

### Method of teaching

Lecture and Lab.

Readings of stories and excerpts of novels. Screening and analysis of clips of important films adapted from literature and true-life stories. The source material will be compared to the adaptation, revealing the essence of each medium.

### Course requirements

The reading of the book *Pinocchio* (Carlo Collodi) is recommended prior to the beginning of the course. Ideally students should read the novel (which can be found in the course readings below) from beginning to end, before it is analyzed in class.



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## Learning outcomes

Students will learn narrative techniques and how Literature and Biography can be manipulated to create an original piece of art: the screenplay. Students will discover great examples of Italian novels and films and, through them, they'll acquire a deeper knowledge of the Italian Culture.

## Grading

Class participation	30%
Final exam	40%
Creative work: Short film script.	30%

## Rules of conduct

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Please consider that Field Trips are considered equal to regular classes and indeed you are expected to attend the visits. Unexcused absences will not be accepted. An excused absence will only be granted if you are seriously ill and can support your claim with a local doctor's certificate dated the day you missed class (therefore you must go to the doctor that same day) that has to be delivered to the Professor or to UCSC International Office. Any other absence will not be excused and will result in not being admitted to the final exam, which corresponds to a 0 (zero) in the final exam.

**Exam Date:** The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Should the dates of the final exams be moved for force major reasons, UCSC International Office and the Professor will promptly inform you in class and/or via e-mail on the new date agreed. Unexcused absences to the exams will result in a failing grade in the course. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, you must submit a medical certificate and communicate your absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, you will receive an automatic Failed. Absences for other unforeseeable circumstances will not be accepted and will result in a failing grade.

## Course reading and materials

All the required readings will be available in a course pack and the lecturer's slides will be available on Blackboard.

### Required reading (excerpts):

- Robert Mc Kee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting*, Harper Collins Publishers, NYC
- Linda Seger, *The art of adaptation: turning fact and fiction into film*, Owl Book, NYC 1992.
- Luigi Pirandello, *The wheelbarrow* (short story)

### Some excerpts from the following Italian novel (in English, to be read prior to course):

- Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio*.

### Required films:

- *Pinocchio* (2002) by Roberto Benigni.
- *Il divo* (2008) by Paolo Sorrentino (some clips in class).



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## Schedule

### WEEK 1

#### **Lesson 1: 12 July [3 h]**

Introduction to narrative techniques: clear vision.  
Why we need stories and the beginning of the writing process: concept and premise.

- Exercise on location.

#### **Lesson 2: 13 July [3 h]**

Guidelines to short film: The dramatic moment.  
Screening of short film.  
Script format.

#### **Lesson 3: 14 July [3 h]**

Text and subtext.  
Location script.

- Complete **location script**

#### **Lesson 4: 15 July [3 h]**

Feedback on location script.  
Structure.  
The story triangle.

#### **Lesson 5: 16 July [3 h]**

The structure of a story: the Hero's journey as a pattern for epic tales and fairy tales. The example of Pinocchio.

Work on **story ideas** for final project (NB: final project will be individual or in pairs, depending on the number of students).

- Read "The wheelbarrow" by Pirandello by July 20.

### WEEK 2

#### **Lesson 6: 19 July [3 h]**

Discussion on your **story ideas** for final project.

#### **Lesson 7: 20 July [3 h]**

Character. Exercise on character.  
The example of "The wheelbarrow" by Pirandello.



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Work on outline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Deadline for submitting the <b>outline</b> of your <b>short film</b></li></ul>
<b>Lesson 8: 21 July [3 h]</b> Field study / guest lecture.
<b>Lesson 9: 22 July [3 h]</b> Feedback on outline. More exercise on character. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Watch “Pinocchio” by Benigni by July 25.</li></ul>
<b>Lesson 10: 23 July [3 h]</b> The art of adaptation. Scene analysis. Work on screenplay. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Deadline for <b>first draft of screenplay</b>: July 25 before midnight.</li></ul>

### WEEK 3

<b>Lesson 11: 26 July [3 h]</b> Adaptation: literature & cinema. The case of “Pinocchio” by Benigni
<b>Lesson 12: 27 July [3 h]</b> Feedback on your screenplays. Rewriting your script.
<b>Lesson 13: 28 July [3 h]</b> Creating and shading style, mood and tone. More feedback on your screenplays.
<b>Lesson 14: 29 July [2 h]</b> Adaptation from true life stories: the case of Andreotti. Analysis of “Il Divo” by Sorrentino as an example of adaptation from a true-life story.
<b>Lesson 15: 30 July [2 h]</b> <b>FINAL EXAM</b> in class. <b>Last draft of screenplay</b> by midnight.



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### Bio of instructor

**Mara Perbellini** is a scriptwriter for major film and TV production Companies. After her B.A. in Italian Literature and her master's degree in Screenwriting at UCSC of Milan, she began to write screenplays and work as a story analyst for Rai Fiction and Eagle Pictures. She also worked as assistant director on the TV-movie "Una famiglia per caso" for RAI 1.

She attended the Film School at the New York Film Academy, both in NYC and in L.A. (at Universal Studios) and the London Academy of Radio, Film & TV: while there, she directed, wrote and edited 4 short films.

She has had over twelve feature film stories and screenplays commissioned, purchased or optioned. In 2009 she got an Award for best screenplay at the Fiuggi International Family Film Festival with the film "Il sirenitto". After that she wrote 10 episodes for the animated series "Uffa che Pazienza!" (Rai 2, season 1 and 2, which earned the Pulcinella Award at Cartoons on the Bay 2008 as best TV series for children) and several prime-time mini-series and series, such as "Distretto di polizia 8" (Canale 5), "Ci vediamo a Portofino" (DAP), "La vita che corre" (Rai 1), "Eleonora Duse" (Publispei), "Ombre sulla neve" (Casanova Multimedia), "Made in Italy" (TaoDue Film, season 1 and 2, for Mediaset/Amazon Prime Video), "Penny on Mars" (3zero2, Disney Italia and Disney U.K. – 3 seasons), of which she is head-writer since season 2.

In 2019 she won the StoryLab contest with an epic historical film: "The last days of the Republic".

In 2020 she was headwriter of the teen series "Marta&Eva" (3zero2/RAI) and she wrote 7 teleplays for the animated series "Nina&Olga" (Enanimation/RAI).

She's currently writing a cinematic project as well as other TV projects.

Mara is also a playwright. In 2012-3 she wrote 5 plays for "Decalogo parte prima" that premiered at the Spoleto "Festival dei due mondi" in 2013.

In 2006 Mara joined the Faculty of IES Abroad Milan, where she teaches History of Italian Cinema and visual storytelling. In 2012 she joined the Faculty of UCSC where she teaches *Creative Storytelling* with Prof. Provenzi and *Fellini and contemporary Italian Cinema*. She teaches at MISP (master's in international screenwriting and production) and tutors film students at UCSC, both for MISP and the film-making summer course at the School of Visual Arts in NYC (since 2009).

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